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2	UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
3	SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
4	Case No. 18-23538-rdd
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8	In the Matter of:
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10	SEARS HOLDINGS CORPORATION, et al.,
11	
12	Debtors.
13	
14	x
15	
16	United States Bankruptcy Court
17	300 Quarropas Street, Room 248
18	White Plains, New York 10601
19	
20	June 27, 2019
21	2:14 PM
22	
23	BEFORE:
24	HON. ROBERT D. DRAIN
25	U.S. BANKRUPTCY JUDGE

Page 2 HEARING Re: Assume/Reject Leases re: Bruce Trust HEARING Re: Declaration/Second Declaration of Samuel Levander in Support of Transform Holdco LLCs Reply to the Bruce Trusts (I) Designatable Contract Assumption and Assignment Objection and (II) Reservation of Rights (with Exhibits W and X) (related document(s) 4091, 4094, 4028, 3868, 3008, 3421, 2507, 1774, 2881, 4092) Transcribed by: Lisa Beck

	Page 3
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25	

Pq 4 of 89 Page 4 PROCEEDINGS 1 2 THE COURT: Please be seated. Okay. Good 3 afternoon. In re Sears Holdings Corp. 4 MR. BAREFOOT: Good afternoon, Your Honor. Luke 5 Barefoot from Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton for Transform Holdco and its affiliates for the record. 6 7 THE COURT: Good morning (sic). 8 MR. BAREFOOT: Your Honor, we're here this 9 afternoon on the evidentiary hearing for the dispute between Transform Holdco and the Bruce Trusts concerning the 10 11 Asheville, North Carolina Kmart. 12 THE COURT: Right. 13 MR. BAREFOOT: Before we turn to the merits of 14 that, I just wanted to address a housekeeping matter. Your Honor, we have six orders that we submitted on notice of 15 16 presentment. The presentment date either passed yesterday 17 or this afternoon. Extending the time under Section 365(d)(4) for six different -- there are six different 18 19 orders that cover in total seven different leases. With Your Honor's permission, we just propose to submit those to 20 21 your chambers. 22 THE COURT: No, that's fine. MR. BAREFOOT: Your Honor -- and for the merits 23 24 portion of the hearing, I'm going to turn this over to my 25 colleague, Sam Levander.

	1 9 5 6 65
	Page 5
1	THE COURT: Okay.
2	MR. LEVANDER: Thank you, Your Honor. Sam
3	Levander on behalf of Transform Holdco LLC.
4	Your Honor, before I begin, I'd just like to
5	confirm that you received the parties' hard copy filings and
6	exhibit binders. There should be one larger binder with 41
7	exhibits
8	THE COURT: Right.
9	MR. LEVANDER: And then a smaller one with four
10	exhibits.
11	THE COURT: Yes for a total of 45.
12	MR. LEVANDER: Total of 45.
13	THE COURT: Right.
14	MR. LEVANDER: The last document in the larger
15	binder is the deposition transcript of Paul Bruce who is the
16	sole declarant on behalf of the Bruce Trusts.
17	THE COURT: Right.
18	MR. LEVANDER: And the parties have agreed to
19	designate portions of his deposition transcript in lieu of
20	calling for his live testimony today.
21	THE COURT: Okay.
22	MR. LEVANDER: So that means there will be no live
23	cross-examination of any witnesses in connection with this
24	hearing.
25	THE COURT: And those are the portions marked in

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	Page 6
1	orange and blue?
2	MR. LEVANDER: And the orange marks are Transform
3	marks.
4	THE COURT: Right.
5	MR. LEVANDER: The blue ones are Bruce Trust
6	marks.
7	THE COURT: Okay. All right.
8	MR. LEVANDER: Okay?
9	THE COURT: All right. So you've agreed the
10	parties, that is, have agreed to the admissibility of all 45
11	of these exhibits.
12	MR. GOODMAN: Your Honor, Brett Goodman, Troutman
13	Sanders, on behalf of the Bruce Trusts.
14	Yes. We did agree to the admissibility of the 45
15	exhibits subject to certain documents being held in
16	confidentiality and under seal
17	THE COURT: Right.
18	MR. GOODMAN: which
19	THE COURT: That's fine. Okay. But they're
20	admitted into the record. They'll be subject to the sealing
21	order.
22	MR. GOODMAN: Okay.
23	MR. LEVANDER: Thank you, Your Honor.
24	THE COURT: Which I'm not sure it's been entered
25	yet. But in any event there have been like 10 sealing

Page 7 orders in this case in the last two weeks. So I don't 1 2 recall if that order's been entered yet. But if it isn't, 3 I'm assuming it will be. MR. GOODMAN: Thank you, Your Honor. 4 5 MR. LEVANDER: Thank you, Your Honor. 6 (Joint Transform Holdco's and Bruce Trusts' exhibits 7 received in evidence) 8 MR. LEVANDER: So, Your Honor, there's a lot of 9 paper in front of you and there's a long history here. 10 this is actually a very simple case. Kmart has been the tenant of a lease at 1001 11 12 Patton Avenue in Asheville, North Carolina continuously since 1964. That lease has been amended and extended but 13 14 it's never been terminated or subordinated. Now I'd like to just very briefly go through the 15 16 chronology and just hit on a few key points. So in 1964, 17 the fee owner and Kmart entered into a lease. And then the 18 critical point occurs two years later in 1966. And that's when the fee owner assigns its landlord interest in the 19 20 Kmart lease to a third party. Then in 1992, the fee owner's 21 assignee as landlord extended the Kmart lease for a term of 22 The Kmart lease is therefore currently unexpired. 40 years. Now the objectors argue in the alternative that 23 the Kmart lease either expired in 2001 or that it expired in 24

2019. Both of those arguments fail. If the Kmart lease had

expired in 2001, that would lead to the absurd conclusion that Kmart remained a tenant of the Asheville property without any objection for more than 17 years after its lease expired.

Now we make a number of arguments in our briefs as to why this argument fails. I just want to highlight two points for you today. First, Paul Bruce, the objectors' sole declarant, admitted in his deposition that the Kmart lease did not expire in 2001 because it was extended by the 1992 second amendment. And that's at page 104 of the transcript of his deposition.

And then second, if you take a look at the first document in the smaller binder, that's tab 42, the real property purchase agreement, M, between the Bruce Trusts and a redacted purchaser, the objectors again admitted that in March 2018, Kmart was a current tenant and that the Kmart lease had been extended in 1992.

A few highlights from that document. In paragraph 30(c) on page 8, the Kmart lease is defined as an existing lease. And at the end of that paragraph, you'll see a description of the Kmart lease as extended in its 1992 amendment. And then finally, if you turn to Exhibit B on the final page of that document, you will again see a description of the Kmart lease, as amended, by the second and third amendments to the Kmart lease.

So that's a concession that Kmart is an existing tenant as of 2018, 17 years after they argue may have expired.

expired in 2019, that argument fares no better. The crux of the 2019 argument is that the 1964 Kmart lease was a sublease that was dependent on two overleases, the 1966 ground lease and assignment and the 1975 sandwich lease. But both of those supposed overleases explicitly state that they were entered into subject to the prior Kmart lease.

Objectors failed to plausibly explain when and how the Kmart lease became subordinated when it turned from a lease into a sublease. And the key documents in this case make it clear that Kmart never became a subtenant.

Now, Your Honor, if it would be helpful, I can go through --

THE COURT: I guess you also rely on the fact that as part of that 1966 transaction, the Bruces assigned all right and title and interest in the lease to Patent Plaza Associates, PPA.

MR. LEVANDER: That's correct. And that provision, 1307 of that contract, couldn't be more clear in terms of making an assignment from the Bruces to PPA.

THE COURT: Okay.

MR. LEVANDER: So if you have any questions about

any of the documents, I'm happy to --

THE COURT: So, in sum, you contend that under applicable North Carolina law and the underlying agreements, the store lease, the lease of the -- originally with Kresge, the Kmart lease, does not terminate upon the termination of the ground lease because the ground lease is not a head lease to which the Kmart lease is subject but rather it's the other way around.

MR. LEVANDER: That's correct.

THE COURT: And when there was an amendment, whenever there was an amendment, by the landlord under the Kmart lease as assignee, that amendment was binding on the owner of the property and the landlord under the ground lease because of the absolute assignment and the fact that the ground lease is subject to the Kmart lease.

MR. LEVANDER: That's correct.

THE COURT: So I understand all of that other than the ground lease being subject to the Kmart lease. I don't think you're saying that by that anything more than, obviously, while it's in effect, the ground lease is subject to the Kmart lease, right? Because that's all it is. And I believe it expired in 2019. But what you're really saying is that when the parties entered into the assignment of the Kmart lease and the ground lease, they didn't evidence any contrary intention to the fact that that was a complete

Page 11 assignment of the whole title and the lease and not subject 1 2 to any other reservations. Is that right? 3 MR. LEVANDER: That's correct. THE COURT: Okay. All right. Okay. I think I 4 5 followed all of that. Now given all of that, you really 6 don't need to get into ratification or agency theory other 7 than, I guess, stating as another way that because of the 8 absolute assignment, the right party to deal with was, in 9 fact, PPA and its assigns. 10 MR. LEVANDER: That's correct. So we --11 THE COURT: There wasn't -- the ground lessor fee 12 owner was not the right party to deal with after that 13 absolute assignment. 14 MR. LEVANDER: That's correct. Exactly. 15 THE COURT: They could be deemed to be bound by it 16 but the --17 MR. LEVANDER: Right. 18 THE COURT: -- party who would be the actual agent 19 would be the assignee which originally was Patton Plaza 20 Associates, PPA, and their -- through assignments from it, 21 it became Nineteenth Asheville Corp. and then what the 22 parties refer to as NAP. 23 MR. LEVANDER: That's exactly right. THE COURT: Okay. All right. 24 25 MR. LEVANDER: And I'm happy to answer any further

questions or come back on rebuttal.

THE COURT: Okay. All right. Thank you.

MR. GOODMAN: Good afternoon, Your Honor. Brett Goodman, Troutman Sanders, for the record, on behalf of the Steven Bruce Revocable Trust, the Cara Bruce Irrevocable Trust and the Allison Bruce Irrevocable Trust, all three trusts being collectively called the Bruce Trusts for the purposes of this hearing and the papers. And I just want to also point out that we have Mr. Paul Bruce here in the courtroom. He traveled up today for the hearing. Mr. Bruce is the declarant and the custodian of record for the trust.

THE COURT: Right. But since all the exhibits are admitted and his deposition portions have been denominated, he doesn't need to testify.

MR. GOODMAN: Understood, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Okay.

MR. GOODMAN: Your Honor, I actually just want to deal myself with the burden of proof argument that was raised in the papers and then I'll probably hand off the rest of the argument.

Your Honor, Transform's argument in its reply with respect to the burden of proof is simply wrong. In their brief, Transform relies on a series of inapplicable cases that address only whether the agreements at issue constitute a true lease or a disguised security agreement under the

Page 13 UCC. And in those cases, the law is such that the parties 1 2 seeking to characterize the agreement as something other 3 than it purports to be has the burden. 4 Here, however, Your Honor, there's no dispute 5 among the parties that the Kmart lease is a true lease. 6 Rather, the only question is whether that lease has expired. 7 THE COURT: Well, but doesn't that depend on the 8 characterization of it as a lease or a sublease? I mean, 9 there is a characterization element to this. 10 MR. GOODMAN: Well --11 THE COURT: I mean, put it differently, this --12 MR. GOODMAN: -- it's a 36 -- I think from our 13 standpoint, regardless, it's a 365 issue and they are the 14 movant and therefore they have the burden of proof. THE COURT: 'Cause it says assign a lease. 15 16 statute says assign a lease. 17 MR. GOODMAN: And they purport for it to be a lease --18 19 THE COURT: Right. MR. GOODMAN: -- the Kmart lease. So --20 21 THE COURT: But you know what? I don't think it 22 really matters here because this is, to my mind, having gone through all of the pleadings -- I mean, I understand your 23 24 arguments but I don't think it matters because going through 25 the pleadings, this isn't an issue where the burden of proof

	Page 14
1	is really that important based on, I think, the documents
2	and the law.
3	MR. GOODMAN: That's fair, Your Honor. And I
4	don't need to belabor the point. I guess, the balance of
5	our arguments and our objections relate to the
6	interpretation of the lease documents and the transaction
7	under applicable North Carolina law.
8	THE COURT: Right.
9	MR. GOODMAN: And my colleague, Amy Williams, who
10	has been admitted pro hac and is a partner in our Charlotte
11	office, will be addressing that. So I'll hand off the
12	balance of the argument so as not to belabor the burden
13	point.
14	THE COURT: Okay.
15	MR. GOODMAN: Thank you, Your Honor.
16	MS. WILLIAMS: So, Your Honor, well, I
17	THE COURT: You can stay there, if you want. If
18	you're more comfortable there, that's fine.
19	MS. WILLIAMS: Well, no. I can
20	THE COURT: It's up to you.
21	MS. WILLIAMS: My voice does not carry that far,
22	Your Honor.
23	THE COURT: Well, there's a microphone there, too.
24	But
25	MS. WILLIAMS: Well, that's true.

THE COURT: But hopefully, the podium will hold your notebook. Okay.

MS. WILLIAMS: We'll come here. Thank you, Your Honor. First of all, just to introduce myself to the Court, I'm Amy Pritchard Williams, a member of the North Carolina bar. And I appreciate the opportunity to appear this morning on behalf of the Bruce Trusts.

THE COURT: Okay. Good afternoon.

MS. WILLIAMS: Or this afternoon. Thank you.

I am going to focus on the legal argument, Your Honor, because I do think there's an important aspect of North Carolina law, especially North Carolina law in the 1960s when the ground lease was executed that we want to draw to the Court's attention.

I will make just a couple of points in response to the -- a couple of fact points that Mr. Levander made. If you look at the document that's under seal, Your Honor, in Joint Exhibit 42, both paragraphs 30(c) and 30(d) contain an express sentence. And I'll just read one into the record. That's the paragraph that's dealing with various property leases, Your Honor. And the very last sentence reads:

"Further, nothing in this paragraph shall be construed as an admission or representation by Sellers that any of the existing leases legally continue after the termination of the current lease" -- which I believe is referring to the

	Page 16
1	ground lease. And it goes on to essentially reiterate that
2	the sellers are of the view that these leases could all
3	terminate in 2019 when the ground lease terminates.
4	So just to make the point that this contract isn't
5	any sort of admission on the part
6	THE COURT: Right.
7	MS. WILLIAMS: of my clients.
8	THE COURT: Well, I think it I think it may be
9	an admission that the lease didn't terminate in 2001. I
10	think it centers on what I think is the main argument here
11	which is upon the ground lease's termination
12	MS. WILLIAMS: Right.
13	THE COURT: does the lease terminate.
14	MS. WILLIAMS: Your Honor, the
15	THE COURT: Does the Kmart lease also terminate.
16	MS. WILLIAMS: Right. And if I could, my short
17	answer to that but I'd like to give the Court a longer
18	one
19	THE COURT: Okay.
20	MS. WILLIAMS: that will talk about North
21	Carolina law. My short
22	THE COURT: That's fine.
23	MS. WILLIAMS: My short answer to that question
24	is, I think, at the latest, the original '64 lease expired
25	by its terms in '01. There is the '92 amendment which we

view as an agreement between NAP and Kmart that allowed

Kmart to have possession of the property. And it may not be

called a sublease but when you enter into a lease with a

subtenant for the property -- and we'll talk about what

NAP's -- the limits on NAP's authority was. That's

effectively a sublease.

So there's nothing -- in terms of dealing both with all of those alternative theories posited that's sort of the question of, well, Kmart's been there forever, all of that is perfectly consistent with --

THE COURT: With a long-term sublease.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- with a long-term sublease --

THE COURT: Right.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- that expired when the landlord under that sublease lost its right of possession which, I think, everyone agrees, it's undisputed, was in 2019.

But what I'd like to do, Your Honor, is take the

Court back to 1966 when the ground lease was drafted and

executed because I think it's important to recognize what

the state of law looked like in North Carolina when it comes

to real property conveyances. And it's important to

recognize that this was, in fact, a ground lease.

Transform, in its papers, tries to call a ground lease an

assignment because they want to point to the assignment.

The parties to this transaction and their successors never

called it that. They called it an indenture lease. And the reason that that's important is that prior to January 1st, 1968, in North Carolina, Courts placed principal importance on any kind of contract conveying real property on the granting and the have and to hold clauses.

We talk about this in our papers -- and I'll cite to the Court the 1980 Whetsell v. Johnson -- sorry -- Jernigan decision primarily because it has an excellent history of the case law on this issue. But it sets out very clearly that prior to a statute being enacted, effective 1/1/68, if there was any sort of incongruity or disagreement or contradiction between the granting and the have and to hold clauses and the rest of the conveyance, those two clauses controlled to the point at which there are several cases where the granting clause looks like a fee simple. Later in the deed, it's very clear that the grantor meant to convey only a life estate and the Court rules that it's a fee simple conveyance. And this -- the 1948 Artis decision does the same thing.

The North Carolina legislature when they enacted
- they enacted the statute to change the rule. But the

statute is expressly prospective and that's actually the

holding of Whetsell. In 1/1/68, the legislature enacted a

statute that says a Court shall determine the effect of the

instrument on the basis of the intent of the parties as it

Page 19 appears from all of the provisions of the instrument. 1 2 But in 1966, when these parties were preparing 3 this ground lease, it would have been clear to all of them that that's what this was, a grant of the premises for a 5 term of years and no longer. So the assignment in Article 6 13 has to be read in conjunction with the limits on what the 7 overall instrument was conveying. And the overall instrument did not convey the ability for the ground lessor 9 to bind the fee simple owner to a term that went beyond that 10 of the ground tenant. 11 THE COURT: Well, it doesn't say that, though, 12 right? And it is an absolute assignment of the lease. 13 MS. WILLIAMS: Well, I --THE COURT: Isn't it? I mean, it does assign -- I 14 mean, the parties did assign the Kmart lease. 15 16 MS. WILLIAMS: For the term of the ground lease 17 only --18 THE COURT: It doesn't say --19 MS. WILLIAMS: -- Your Honor. 20 THE COURT: -- that. 21 MS. WILLIAMS: If you look at Article 13 as a 22 whole, and this is one subsection of one article -- and again, I -- Transform wants to read certain subsections and 23 24 forget about others. 25 THE COURT: Right.

Page 20 MS. WILLIAMS: But if the Court has Joint Exhibit 1 2 5, I believe --3 (Pause) THE COURT: Okay. 4 5 MS. WILLIAMS: So, Your Honor, if you look at 6 Article 13 as a whole --7 THE COURT: Right. MS. WILLIAMS: -- first of all, it's called 8 9 "Assignment, Subletting and Mortgaging". So it's covering 10 what I would argue are pieces of one aspect of the 11 conveyance -- the rights of the ground tenant under the 12 ground lease. 13 If you look at all of these sections together, the 14 first Article 13.01 makes it clear that if there's going to 15 be a sublet of all of the lease or the leasehold, the 16 tenant, in doing so, cannot encumber the landlord's title to 17 the demised premises. So there's a limit there on the 18 ability of the tenant to encumber the landlord's title. 19 13.0 --20 THE COURT: Can I interrupt you? 21 MS. WILLIAMS: Sure. 22 The Kmart lease already happened that THE COURT: 23 precedes this agreement. Kmart's not a party to this 24 agreement. 25 MS. WILLIAMS: Right, Your Honor. But the '92

Page 21 1 amendment does not. 2 THE COURT: But --3 MS. WILLIAMS: The power, the ability --THE COURT: I understand. But I think that the 4 5 language you're referring to is referring to new leases or 6 subleases. 7 MS. WILLIAMS: And any transfers of this lease. If --8 9 THE COURT: Well, that's right. This lease, 10 meaning the ground lease. 11 MS. WILLIAMS: Right, Your Honor. And what I'm 12 attempting -- let me back up and just give a preview of 13 where I'm going with this. 14 THE COURT: Okay. MS. WILLIAMS: What I'm trying to show the Court 15 16 is that the subsections of Article 13 each cover a different 17 aspect of what the ground tenant is allowed to do with its 18 leasehold. And what they consistently have in common with 19 one another is they prohibit an encumbrance on the property 20 without the consent of the fee owner for a period of longer 21 than 10 years or, in the case of 13.01, certainly longer 22 than the ground lease itself because you're not allowed to encumber the fee. And what Transform is arguing is that 23 without -- despite the fact that this is a ground lease for 24 25 a term of years and despite the then North Carolina law, the

Page 22 folks who wrote this, would have understood that there is an exception to every kind of ability or, in fact, inability to encumber the fee that solely applies to the Kmart lease. And the parties never say that. THE COURT: Well, they do say in 13.07 that they're referring to the existing leases. MS. WILLIAMS: Well, I mean, that's right, Your But again, we would argue that 13.07 has to be read really in deference to the term of years. But if I can turn to --THE COURT: It would be the 99-year term of the ground lease? MS. WILLIAMS: Well, if at all -- if all of the extensions had been granted, yes. But they -- if all the extensions had been authorized, yes. But they weren't. So it's to have and to hold for as long as this ground lease is in place. And then this ground lease goes away at the end of January 2019. I do want to talk, Your Honor, about --THE COURT: Well, I guess I'm having -- I'm having a hard time seeing that. I mean, 13.07 is pretty specific. It doesn't have a carveout for anything else. And this agreement follows the prior agreement which is wholly assigned by the parties to this agreement to the Kmart landlord. So, I mean, --

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	Page 23
1	MS. WILLIAMS: And
2	THE COURT: Can you address the cases dealing with
3	complete assignments of the leases and other executory
4	contracts that the buyer has cited here, like Northside
5	Station
6	MS. WILLIAMS: Well, Your Honor, the principal -
7	THE COURT: et cetera?
8	MS. WILLIAMS: way in which I distinguish those
9	cases is that they weren't written in 1966 in North
10	Carolina.
11	THE COURT: Well, they go back to case law from
12	1909. So I'm not sure that really helps me.
13	MS. WILLIAMS: Well, I I mean, in
14	THE COURT: I mean
15	MS. WILLIAMS: I don't know that
16	THE COURT: albeit that was not a lease but it
17	deals with the assignment of a contract.
18	MS. WILLIAMS: Right.
19	THE COURT: And
20	MS. WILLIAMS: And the difference here is the real
21	property aspect of this, Your Honor.
22	THE COURT: Well
23	MS. WILLIAMS: I mean, it
24	THE COURT: the same principle really should
25	apply. I mean, how can two parties deprive a third party

that has full rights under a contract of those rights by selling off the fee title? And at the same time, the parties provide for absolute assignment of the first contract. So it's still there. It's just -- it seems to be contrary to these cases. I mean, I agree with your underlying premise. And in fact, there's a good reference to it in Neal v. Craig Brown, Inc. --

MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

THE COURT: -- where the Court says if it's not a full assignment and it's just a sublease then termination of the original lease terminates any dependent sublease. is true notwithstanding the fact that the sublease contains options to renew. And I think that's what you're arguing here is that the options to renew are in a sublease. it's pretty clear to me that this Kmart lease never was a sublease. And the parties didn't make it a sublease when the owner sold its fee interest but got a complete assignment of the lease. There's no remaining tenancy. It's a total complete assignment. So it seems like, under these cases, this is not the Neal v. Craig Brown situation but rather you could, I guess, phrase it one of two ways. Either Kmart can enforce its -- now Sears can enforce its rights through NAP to the Bruce Trusts or NAP, having been made by the 1966 agreements because the lease refers to being effective on assignees -- the Kmart lease, that is --

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1	the full assignee of the agreement is the agent for the
2	Bruce Trusts. So the Bruce Trusts, in essence, are
3	breaching the agreement by saying you can't actually extend.
4	MS. WILLIAMS: Your Honor, could I hand up we
5	attached this to our papers but it's a flow chart. And I
6	just want to make sure that we're on the same page. NAP was
7	not a tenant under the ground lease at the time of the '92
8	amendment.
9	THE COURT: I know.
10	MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. It
11	THE COURT: You have the whole I understand.
12	You have this
13	MS. WILLIAMS: It was a
14	THE COURT: sandwich lease in between.
15	MS. WILLIAMS: It was a
16	THE COURT: But that's just adding more
17	MS. WILLIAMS: But
18	THE COURT: You still have the actual lease, the
19	Kmart lease, which never, to me, was a sublease.
20	MS. WILLIAMS: And if I could address if I
21	could just to an argument that, again, is addressing whether
22	or not NAP had the power to do what it did under the ground
23	lease and I do want to talk to the Court about 13.03
24	THE COURT: Okay.
25	MS. WILLIAMS: and the fact that throughout

Pg 26 of 89 Page 26 this ground lease, again -- and I would cite the Walmart 1 2 cases that are in our papers for this proposition that one 3 should read contracts if we're talking about contracts, in a way that makes sense and read them as a whole. 4 5 In 13 -- Transform makes the argument that the 6 parties to the ground lease were distinguishing carefully 7 between what is a lease and what is a sublease. And the 8 words of this ground lease just don't stand up to that, Your 9 Honor. 13.03 says that you can sublet to an occupying 10 subtenant without the written consent of the landlord if three conditions are followed. But the middle of those 11 12 three conditions is that the term of said lease, which is 13 also capitalized for reasons that are not clear, can't be 14 more than 10 years. THE COURT: Wouldn't this have to -- if -- to 15 16 follow your interpretation of this, wouldn't it have to say 17 "Tenant may continue subletting" as opposed to "sublet"? I 18 mean, doesn't this really apply to new leases --19 MS. WILLIAMS: No, Your Honor. 20 THE COURT: -- i.e., new subleases? 21 MS. WILLIAMS: That's my point, is that the -- in 22 this document, in the ground lease, there are a number of 23 places where if you read --

THE COURT: Well, I'm just focusing on the first

law which is --

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	Page 27
1	MS. WILLIAMS: Right.
2	THE COURT: 13.03.
3	MS. WILLIAMS: So but my point is, is that this
4	was not intended by the parties the word "subtenant" was
5	not intended to exclude Kmart.
6	THE COURT: Well
7	MS. WILLIAMS: And the reason that I say that is
8	that there are plenty of other places in
9	THE COURT: Well, let's go through.
10	MS. WILLIAMS: the lease.
11	THE COURT: I
12	MS. WILLIAMS: Sure.
13	THE COURT: So far I don't see it in 13.03 but we
14	should go
15	MS. WILLIAMS: All right.
16	THE COURT: through the other ones to
17	MS. WILLIAMS: So I've made my point about 13.03.
18	THE COURT: Right.
19	MS. WILLIAMS: In 13.10, if we are distinguishing
20	between subleases and leases, the language in 13.10 relating
21	to a future occupancy lease doesn't make any sense because
22	there wouldn't be an because to the Court's point, any
23	lease entered into in the future is going to be a sublease.
24	THE COURT: Okay. Let's just walk through
25	13.10, right?

MS. WILLIAMS: 13.10. And my point is that it's referring to -- bear with me. If you look at the top of page 13(g), this is the provision that puts limits on the ability to enter into agreements that would affect -- and then it says "any present or future occupancy lease which would reduce the rent or shorten the term".

THE COURT: Okay.

MS. WILLIAMS: Transform focuses on the second half of that sentence. I'm focusing on the fact that they're talking about future occupancy leases which, if we follow the Transform construction of this document, there wouldn't be any leases in the technical sense; there would be subleases.

THE COURT: Oh. You mean, because they say future

-- well, but this is consistent with 13.07. I mean, the

deal here, I believe, that's consistent with the absolute

assignment is that the ground tenant who's also assigned the

Kmart lease isn't going to -- sorry. It's not 13.07. 13 -
no. I mean, this hasn't happened as far as this debtor --

MS. WILLIAMS: But --

THE COURT: -- this tenant is concerned. It didn't reduce the rent. It didn't reduce the terms.

MS. WILLIAMS: But I'm making --

THE COURT: It actually increased the rent and increased the terms.

	Page 29
1	MS. WILLIAMS: I'm making a different point, Your
2	Honor
3	THE COURT: No, I understand.
4	MS. WILLIAMS: which is
5	THE COURT: but it's
6	MS. WILLIAMS: the way that we're talking about
7	language. The way that
8	THE COURT: I know. It says leases.
9	MS. WILLIAMS: parties to the lease talk about
10	language
11	THE COURT: But that
12	MS. WILLIAMS: use language
13	THE COURT: But this would apply. This would
14	apply because, as a lease, it's perfectly understandable
15	that you wouldn't want the Kmart lease to have a lower rent
16	or a shorter term.
17	MS. WILLIAMS: Right. But my point, Your Honor,
18	is that if Transform's reading of the language is correct
19	then this should read "any present occupancy lease or future
20	occupancy sublease". And the parties just weren't that
21	THE COURT: No. You could this would
22	MS. WILLIAMS: They just didn't do that.
23	THE COURT: apply to both. You could use the
24	word "lease" here to apply to both
25	MS. WILLIAMS: And

	. g c c c c c
	Page 30
1	THE COURT: either type of lease.
2	MS. WILLIAMS: And you could use the word
3	"sublease" before to also apply to Kmart
4	THE COURT: No. But they
5	MS. WILLIAMS: because they were functionally
6	thinking about
7	THE COURT: But I actually think this actually
8	makes it I think, to me, this makes Transforms' point.
9	If you do a Venn diagram, "sublease" means sublease.
10	"Lease" covers both. And this logically does cover both
11	because it makes sense that the ground tenant wouldn't
12	reduce the term or the lease rental amount of the assigned
13	Kmart lease. And "lease" covers both. So this one doesn't
14	I mean, but we should keep going.
15	MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. If we look at 13.12
16	THE COURT: Okay.
17	MS. WILLIAMS: which is on page 13(h)
18	THE COURT: Right.
19	MS. WILLIAMS: again, this is a provision that
20	if you take the words "sublease" and "lease" literally, it
21	makes no sense. There weren't any if we're going to use
22	Transform's construction and the Court's construction of the
23	ground lease, there were no subleases then as of the time of
24	the execution of the ground lease.
25	THE COURT: Right.

	. g e z e e e e
	Page 31
1	MS. WILLIAMS: Only the Kmart lease was in effect.
2	THE COURT: Right. Is there
3	MS. WILLIAMS: And so, why is there a provision,
4	particularly at a time, frankly, Your Honor, when leases are
5	typewritten, why did they add a provision about "The
6	landlord has not received any securities under any sublease
7	in effect of the date hereof"?
8	THE COURT: Is there a representation of warranty
9	in here that there are no subleases in effect?
10	MS. WILLIAMS: I'm not familiar that there are,
11	Your Honor.
12	THE COURT: I don't think there is.
13	MS. WILLIAMS: I get to
14	THE COURT: I mean, to me I mean
15	MS. WILLIAMS: I get to there being no subleases.
16	The parties knew that Kmart was the only
17	THE COURT: Well, did they? I mean, how did they
18	know?
19	MS. WILLIAMS: Well, I'll
20	THE COURT: I mean, you can easily just have an
21	arrangement with someone. So, to me, this could be
22	MS. WILLIAMS: But
23	THE COURT: clearly read as, all right, you
24	don't have any securities with any subtenants
25	MS. WILLIAMS: But

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	Page 32
1	THE COURT: because we don't have any
2	subtenants.
3	MS. WILLIAMS: Well
4	THE COURT: They could if they were worried
5	about Kmart, they could say we don't have any securities
6	under the Kmart lease.
7	MS. WILLIAMS: And my argument is, is that they
8	were doing that in Section 13.12.
9	THE COURT: All right. But I think you could just
10	as easily read it to say that
11	MS. WILLIAMS: The
12	THE COURT: there aren't any subleases
13	MS. WILLIAMS: Just to make
14	THE COURT: at least where there's securities.
15	Whether I guess what this means is a security deposit,
16	right?
17	MS. WILLIAMS: Right. And just -
18	THE COURT: Okay.
19	MS. WILLIAMS: to make the evidentiary point,
20	Your Honor, and talk about the history of the building, in
21	'66, there was a single building on the premises that was
22	the Kmart building.
23	THE COURT: Right.
24	MS. WILLIAMS: Joint Exhibit 12, which is an
25	assignment, shows that the Eckerd lease dates from May of

18-23538-shl Doc 7366 Filed 03/03/20 Entered 03/03/20 11:05:04 Main Document Pq 33 of 89 Page 33 1 '66 which is the next lease that was put into place. And 2 Joint Exhibit 7 shows that in 1969, the only two occupants 3 of the premises were Kmart and Eckerd. THE COURT: Well, what about -- I mean, look, I 4 5 don't think this is particularly relevant. But it's a big 6 store. At least in the modern era, big department stores 7 sometimes have a section that is the, I don't know, the 8 jewelry section that may be run by someone else. 9 Conceivably, that's a sublease? I don't know. 10 This just -- it doesn't strike me that this type 11 of provision overrides 13.07 and 13.10. It just -- you 12 know, I don't think it -- the rule is that a complete 13 assignment means it's not a sublease unless the parties 14 indicate some limitations to the contrary. So I think you 15 need to show me indications to the contrary. And these 16 provisions really don't do it to me. 17 MS. WILLIAMS: The last one I'll mention, Your 18 Honor, and then I'll move on, is 18.09 which relates to reports that the fee owner was entitled to get concerning 19 20 the operation of the shopping center. 21 THE COURT: Right. 18.09, you say?

MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah. I'm sorry.

THE COURT: Okay.

MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah. 18.09.

THE COURT: Right.

22

23

24

MS. WILLIAMS: And I just want to make one point and then I'm going to move on to the sandwich lease.

This is an early -- I would call it an early version of what we would now think of as a pretty standard provision. The fee owner was not involved in the operation of the shopping center, right, but the fee owner needs to get information and if the fee owner had a mortgage, would want their mortgage holder to get information.

About not just the name of the subtenant but also the conditions of their respective tenancies -- and I believe that there's testimony in Mr. Bruce's declaration to the effect that he did communicate to understand who the tenants were and what rent was being paid. The way this is written, name of any subtenants with the terms and conditions of their tenancies, it doesn't include the Kmart lease under this reading. And where the Kmart is the anchor tenant occupying even after the extensions were built, you know, 80 percent of the occupiable space, why would the fee -- if there's this technical reading of what is a subtenant and what is a tenant, why would the fee owner exclude the anchor from the ability to get information?

This is -- again, it's just one of a number of instances where we contend that the language of the lease and the language that the parties are using in the lease was not --

Page 35 THE COURT: I'm sorry. You're saying why would 1 2 there -- why would the landlord exclude? 3 MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah. Why would the landlord exclude the anchor tenant from its ability, its guaranteed 4 5 right to get information unless -- so what I am arguing 6 based on that is that the word "subtenant", the parties 7 meant to include Kmart in that. 8 (Pause) 9 THE COURT: And you're saying that this paragraph, 10 18.09, excludes Kmart? 11 MS. WILLIAMS: If you follow the reading -- if you 12 follow the language being used by Transform, yes, because it 13 says "subtenant". And Transform's argument is that Kmart is 14 a tenant --15 THE COURT: Right. 16 MS. WILLIAMS: -- and not a subtenant. 17 THE COURT: Right. MS. WILLIAMS: So if "subtenant" really does mean 18 19 only subtenant and "tenant" really only means tenant then 20 this says that the fee owner is entitled to get detailed 21 information about the income and expenses relating to the operation of the demised premises, the names and conditions 22 of the subtenants' tenancies but apparently is not entitled 23 to get information about the Kmart tenant. 24 25 THE COURT: Well, this provision doesn't carve out

Page 36 1 Kmart, right? 2 MS. WILLIAMS: My -- I think I'm speaking past the 3 Court. THE COURT: Are you --4 5 MS. WILLIAMS: My point is --6 THE COURT: Are you saying that logically, because 7 Kmart was so important to this real estate venture, this 8 would have to have included Kmart? 9 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. The word "subtenant" must 10 also be referring to Kmart. 11 THE COURT: Well --12 MS. WILLIAMS: And it's consis --THE COURT: -- other than the fact that it 13 14 doesn't. I mean, is there any evidence that these reports 15 were actually demanded and provided? 16 MS. WILLIAMS: I believe that Mr. Bruce references 17 that in his declaration, Your Honor, which is docket 4091. 18 THE COURT: Are there any records that have certified true and correct copies and the like? 19 20 MS. WILLIAMS: I'm not sure that -- I don't think 21 that we have records of the certified true and correct, Your 22 But we do have Mr. Bruce from the time that he took 23 over from the fee owner's perspective managing the property and his communications with the agent for NAC or perhaps it 24 25 was NAP. And I suppose, Your Honor, this does go back to

the arguments about burden of proof.

THE COURT: Does he say that he received these?

MS. WILLIAMS: He doesn't say that he received the certified statements, Your Honor. He said that he would -it was more informal than that. He would call and get information.

THE COURT: Okay. All right.

MS. WILLIAMS: But regardless of whether he was getting that, regardless of how that was working, my point is that is one of simple logic. If everyone was being very careful not to call Kmart a subtenant, this provision doesn't make any sense.

THE COURT: Well, unless you had tenants that came in. I mean, there's no assurance or subtenants that Kmart was going to be there forever. It's a big place. And as we know, Kmart, at times, wanted to sublease its stores or portions of the stores. I mean, there's -- you're going -- I mean, it's from 2008 so it wasn't back in 1966. But this was a long-term ground lease. Kmart v. Guastello.

I mean, again, this is the -- I understand the logic you're talking about. But this provision is also completely consistent with the logic that for a subtenant in the future, we want to know who they are. We know who Kmart is. We want to know who these other people are because there was a right to sublease. But we want to know how

Page 38 1 they're doing. 2 MS. WILLIAMS: Well --3 THE COURT: You know, Joe's Carpet Cleaner, 4 whoever. MS. WILLIAMS: Right. And my point is, I think it 5 6 would be a whole lot more important to know what the anchor 7 tenant is doing, that they're paying the rent on time. Then 8 it would -- Joe's Carpet Cleaning. 9 But I'll move on to the --10 THE COURT: Okay. 11 MS. WILLIAMS: -- sandwich lease, Your Honor. 12 THE COURT: All right. I mean, it would be a lot 13 easier to say we want to know what Kmart's doing. 14 MS. WILLIAMS: Well, and my point is that by using the word "subtenant", I think that's what the parties meant 15 16 to do. 17 The sandwich lease, Your Honor, Transform has skipped over the sandwich lease. But we do think that it's 18 19 important and that we make this point. 20 In 1992, the tenant under the ground lease was 21 Asheville KM. It was not NAC or NAP or any of the Samuels Instead, Asheville KM was the ground lease tenant 22 entities. and the sandwich lease landlord. And that lease does a 23 couple of things. First of all, it very clearly refers to 24 25 Kmart as a sublease. It defines it as a sublease in Article

1.2 and Schedule 1.2(b). It does not distinguish between the two. And in Article 7, Asheville KM expressly prohibits its tenant from subletting unless it follows certain conditions. And it says specifically "Tenants shall not modify, alter or amend" and some other words "terminate any sublease now or hereafter existing." And we can argue over whether "sublease" meant was -- included the Kmart lease and the ground lease but there's really no argument that the parties didn't specifically identify Kmart as a sublease in this contract.

THE COURT: Although again, the North Carolina courts have said that whether the parties define an agreement as a sublease or not it's irrelevant if there's been a complete assignment.

MS. WILLIAMS: But here, Your Honor, if one follows the -- well, first of all, the point is that NAP was required to follow the terms of the sandwich lease if it was going to amend the Kmart lease. Okay. Can we -- I mean, I think we can agree on that.

THE COURT: But if the --

MS. WILLIAMS: I mean, NA --

THE COURT: If the Kmart lease was absolutely assigned, as I believe it was in 1966, then all of the assignees of the ground lease from that assignor are subject to that same body of law, aren't they? How can they change

the rules just between themselves?

MS. WILLIAMS: Well, they can change the rules to limit the rules between themselves. So let me explain, Your Honor. That's why the flow chart, I think, is helpful.

In 1992, Asheville KM was the ground lease tenant. So they are the assignee of the Kmart lease. They then sublet to NAC which apparently later becomes NAP. And when Asheville does that, Asheville says to NAP, okay, NAP -- in the sandwich lease -- you run the property. But if you're going to modify any lease, we have to consent. And I would again argue the reason that Asheville KM did that is because Asheville KM wanted to make sure that any modification entered into by NAP complied with Asheville KM's obligations under the ground lease.

So Asheville KM has obligations of the ground tenant. They enter into the sandwich lease with the NAC entity. And they say to the NAC entity very clearly -- and I just don't think there's any dispute about this -- you can't modify or amend or do anything to a sublease, which as defined in that lease includes Kmart, without our consent. And I would then posit the reason that they did that is because Asheville KM had obligations as the ground tenant. But regardless, they did it.

THE COURT: But wasn't the --

MS. WILLIAMS: And regard --

THE COURT: I'm sorry. But wasn't the assignment of the Kmart lease still absolute?

MS. WILLIAMS: Well, no, Your Honor. The assignment of the Kmart lease took place first pursuant to the ground lease and then pursuant to the sandwich lease. So NAP can't ignore the terms of the sandwich lease and do whatever it likes. It's only --

THE COURT: But it wasn't -- but I'm going back to isn't it still an absolute assignment? There was no partial assignments of the Kmart lease, right? There couldn't be, I don't think.

MS. WILLIAMS: Well, again, I'm -- my argument goes back to what does the ground lease really mean. But -- THE COURT: Right.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- I also think that whatever the ground lease assignment says, NAP is not acting pursuant to the ground lease. They're acting pursuant -- their only interest in the property is the sandwich lease. If there were no sandwich lease in 1992, the NAC and NAP entities are not in this chain of title. They're out of it. It's Asheville KM is the ground tenant. So why is it that NAP can enter into an agreement that violates their own lease, their only hold on the property, and yet still bind the fee owner? And not only that, but bind the fee owner to something that apparently is going to go beyond the term of

Page 42 1 the ground lease. 2 And that -- Your Honor, I have a real problem with 3 the idea that a subtenant under the sandwich lease can ignore the sandwich lease, do whatever it likes with Kmart. 4 5 There is no evidence, burden of proof or no burden of proof. 6 There's absolutely no evidence that Asheville KM consented 7 to this. And I think that's undisputed. 8 THE COURT: As the tenant under the ground lease. 9 MS. WILLIAMS: And the landlord under the sandwich 10 lease, yes. Both. Asheville KM is the landlord under the -11 12 THE COURT: All right. But I'm focusing -- the 13 landlord with Kmart or as a subtenant? 14 MS. WILLIAMS: I was referring to --THE COURT: Who has the assignment of the Kmart 15 16 lease at this time in March 1992? 17 MS. WILLIAMS: Asheville KM has conveyed it to NAC 18 as part of the sandwich lease in conjunction with -- I was 19 done on the same day as the sandwich lease. And the 20 sandwich lease, again, places restrictions on what NAP can 21 do. And NAP's only relationship to this piece of property 22 is that it is a subtenant under the sandwich lease. Without the sandwich lease, NAP has no leasehold interest in the 23 24 property whatsoever. 25 So our argument is NAP had to follow the sandwich

lease if it was going to amend the Kmart lease and it didn't. And so the arrangement between NAP and Kmart works between the two of them. But it can't bind the fee owner and encumber the fee owner's interest in the property beyond the time that NAP has any interest in the property. And again, it's undisputed that at the end of January of 2019, when the ground lease expired, so did the sandwich lease. The sandwich lease and the ground lease were designed to run coequally with -- run during the same period of time with one another.

So Transform has not made an argument and I do not understand how a subtenant -- an entity whose interest is through this sandwich lease -- that's their interest in the property. Why don't they have to follow that lease if they're amending or modifying the Kmart lease when the Kmart lease is clearly reflected, clearly called a sublease --

THE COURT: Well, that part I don't --

MS. WILLIAMS: -- in Schedule 1.2.

THE COURT: -- buy. I guess, what is your response to that point?

MR. LEVANDER: To be described as a sublease?

THE COURT: No. No. Not that point. But the fact that the party to -- the landlord party to the second amendment to the Kmart lease does not have title as landlord to that lease based on an absolute assignment.

MR. LEVANDER: So I guess I would --

THE COURT: You need to just stand up when you --

MR. LEVANDER: Sure.

I would turn the Court's attention first to tab 16 of the binder which this is just a description of the leases themselves. But this is a letter from NAC to Kmart that says -- and this is describing the sandwich lease: "By double assignment of lease from Nineteenth Asheville Corp. to Asheville KM and from Asheville KM to Nineteenth Asheville Corp., we arrive at the same landlord as heretofore and all correspondences, notices and rent payments will continue to be forwarded as follows."

so I think that makes clear that the assignment -that there is associated with the sandwich lease a double
assignment by which the landlord interest, the interest as
assignee of the fee owner, as landlord, is still with NAP.
And I think -- again, so the sandwich lease itself -- so
that's tab 15 -- can't be read alone. There are three other
-- there are three assignments that go along with it. So
there's an assignment of -- so NAC assigns to Asheville KM
the ground lease, an assignment. That's in tab 11 in your
binder. And then NAC assigns the Kmart lease along with
three others to Asheville KM. That's tab 12. And then in
tab 14, you have Asheville KM assigning back to NAP the
Kmart lease. So NAC remains the assignee as landlord under

	Page 45			
1	the Kmart lease beyond 1975.			
2	THE COURT: Where's the assignment back? Which			
3	document?			
4	MR. LEVANDER: It's tab 14, Your Honor.			
5	(Pause)			
6	MR. LEVANDER: And there's a reference			
7	THE COURT: This assumes all of the obligations of			
8	the landlord thereunder. Right? NAC assumes all the			
9	obligations of the landlord thereunder, in tab 14, which			
10	would include the obligation to provide the renewal?			
11	MR. LEVANDER: To provide			
12	THE COURT: It's an absolute assignment, in other			
13	words, of the lease.			
14	MR. LEVANDER: Of the Kmart lease.			
15	THE COURT: Yeah. An absolute assignment of the			
16	Kmart lease. Right, that's what it is. Is there any			
17	dispute that tab 14 is an absolute assignment of the Kmart			
18	lease and the assumption by the assignee of all the			
19	obligations of the landlord thereunder?			
20	MS. WILLIAMS: Is that directed at me? I'd like			
21	to			
22	THE COURT: I said it generally to both of you.			
23	MS. WILLIAMS: I'd like			
24	THE COURT: Is there any disagreement about that?			
25	MS. WILLIAMS: Well yes well what I would say			

about tab 14 is that it was entered into in connection -- at the -- on the very same day and in connection with the sandwich lease. And again --

THE COURT: But it's an absolute -- I mean I'm going back to the case law I cited originally where various parties try to get out of obligations that they have because they argue that they're not in privity with a landlord or an assignor party who assigned to their direct privity party, and the Carolina courts repeatedly say, going back to 1909 at least, that if there's been an as absolute assignment you do have the privity and it's -- you're bound.

MS. WILLIAMS: And Your Honor, I'm going to -THE COURT: Can I just say one more thing?

MS. WILLIAMS: Of course.

THE COURT: If it was less than that, if it was -if the assignment of the lease was less than the full lease
wouldn't there have been an obligation to notify Kmart and
Kmart would have had rights under its lease at that point
because it would have been effecting its rights and who it
dealt with, who it paid rent to, who had the right to call a
default and all of those things? Which is why they probably
sent the notice in tab 16.

MS. WILLIAMS: Well --

THE COURT: It -- this is -- I mean you're talking about changing fundamental rights with respect to a contract

Page 47 that's already in existence, and I just -- I think that's 1 2 why the courts adopt this policy. 3 MS. WILLIAMS: And Your Honor, my counter to that would be that Transform is talking about altering the 4 fundamental property rights of the fee simple owner --5 THE COURT: All right. But that's --6 7 MS. WILLIAMS: If I could --8 THE COURT: -- only assuming that I'm wrong, but 9 you haven't answered my question as to why I'm wrong on that 10 point. 11 MS. WILLIAMS: Right. Well I have -- I want to 12 make two points. 13 THE COURT: Okay. MS. WILLIAMS: First is just specific to this 14 I'm not aware of anything in the Kmart lease that 15 16 would require it -- that would entitle it to get notice of 17 any of these transactions with respect to the ground lease. 18 But my point about this assignment at tab -- at 19 Joint Exhibit 14 is that it's executed on the same day as 20 the sandwich lease, and why on earth would they even have a 21 sandwich lease if they're going to turn around and ignore it and say that this assignment authorizes NAC and its 22 successors to do as it pleases with the subleases when the 23 sandwich lease is very clear, don't modify it without our 24 25 consent?

Page 48 THE COURT: Well first of all when you say don't modify the lease already has the renewal provisions in it, right? MS. WILLIAMS: Not in 1975 --THE COURT: Not in 1992. MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. THE COURT: Where it was the second amendment. MS. WILLIAMS: Right. THE COURT: I understand. MS. WILLIAMS: Yep. THE COURT: Where they increased the rent. MS. WILLIAMS: And you know, I mean -- look, Your Honor, our contention is that the '92 document effectively operates as a brand new agreement between NAP and Kmart. It changed the rent, it changed the dimensions, it changed the terms, it put -- NAP agreed to do some things under it, and so yes, we view that functionally speaking as a sublease, an agreement between NAP and Kmart to which the fee owners at the time were not a party, were not provided notice, and there was never even recordation of it despite the fact that it purports to extend the term out, which is very odd under North Carolina law, I have to say the fact that nothing was recorded. I will say that the other thing that I wanted to point out about the recorded assignments, the assignments of

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Page 49 the ground lease that were recorded in the public registry, they all have the same granting and have and to hold language that I pointed the Court to as being so important under North Carolina law. They all say to have and to hold from the date of the assigned to the rest of the years mentioned in the indenture of the lease as amended. So again, in my view that points to limiting the rights of whoever the tenant is ground lease to the term of the ground lease itself. THE COURT: But aren't you just then assuming away the case law on that absolute assignment? MS. WILLIAMS: Your Honor, I think the case law on the absolute assignments, I just don't see it applying in the same way that the Court sees it, because those assignments, as I'm remembering, and I might be misremembering, they don't come in the context of a ground lease that's limit to do a term of --THE COURT: I'm sorry, go ahead. MS. WILLIAMS: I mean I apologize if I'm misremembering the facts there, but I don't think those assignments come in the context of a ground lease that's limited to a term of years and that has other limitations on here's what you can do with it. It -- I mean I agree that if I'm leasing an

apartment from you and the lease allows and it assign my

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tenancy to Mr. Goodman, Mr. Goodman is then your tenant and I'm out of it. But that's not this situation.

This situation is if you lease me the apartment for a long period of time and you give me -- you say look, you can do what you like with the apartment subject to these conditions, but your ability to rent the apartment ends absolutely in six months, I can't give Mr. Goodman more than what comes to the end of my term, and that's what those -- the cases talking about what estate are you granting the grantee? Whether it's -- we cite the Williams case, which is a life tenant who grants an easement to a power company, but the easement ends when the life tenant dies. The East Town case is a more classic sublease situation. But the concept of you can't give more than you have. And in this context --

THE COURT: But I'm sorry, but if the -- if you give him the whole lease then the lessor has the right to operate under the lease.

MS. WILLIAMS: And under that reading of the ground lease that would mean that the ground lease tenant could operate the lease forever even when the ground lease is over.

THE COURT: With that full assignment with no reservations I think that's right.

MS. WILLIAMS: And that is --

Page 51 1 THE COURT: If the extensions are granted as per 2 the lease. 3 MS. WILLIAMS: And that is -- per which lease? THE COURT: The Kmart lease. 4 MS. WILLIAMS: So -- and to my mind that is 5 6 utterly inconsistent with the granting and the have and to 7 hold, and that is where those older cases would say the have 8 and to hold limitations trump, if you will, the assignment 9 language. 10 THE COURT: Okay. Well --11 MS. WILLIAMS: I think that I have -- the Court 12 has been very patient with me to move through those 13 arguments. There are a few, assuming that the Court -- I'll 14 make one more pitch for my sandwich lease argument, Your 15 Honor. 16 I don't see how you can violate the sandwich lease 17 and bind the fee owner, but I would -- there are a couple of 18 other aspects of 365 that I need to just get on the record 19 if I can. 20 THE COURT: Okay. 21 MS. WILLIAMS: The adequate assurance of future 22 performance, I think we've mentioned to the Court that we have three clients in this case and we had asked for 23 24 information about the adequate assurance package. It was 25 provided to us. We have a client -- and I understand where

the Court has ruled on this before -- who -- we've got a couple of issues with the package.

First we've asked Transform to identify who the ultimate tenant is going to be. We all understand the store has been dark since January. Transform isn't going to run a store there. We don't know who our tenant is going to be, and we don't -- we contend that you can't have adequate assurance of future performance if you don't know who's going to be in the space. Having a dark --

THE COURT: Well I could understand that to the extent that not financial performance I guess but other types of covenants. Is that what you're focusing on? I mean if Transform is on the hook of the Transform entity then it's not financial performance you're talking about?

MS. WILLIAMS: It's both, Your Honor. In part because -- we'll talk about Transform in this --

THE COURT: Well let me put it differently. Why would you care about the financial wherewithal of the prospective tenant if that's just an add-on to Transform's own ability to make the payments?

MS. WILLIAMS: The concerns that we have about Transform's ability to make the payments is that we haven't gotten any updated financial information. They're continuing to send out that same one-page balance sheet that we've represented other landlords that we've seen for

Pq 53 of 89 Page 53 several months now, and it seems as if there must be some 2019 operating information, and we don't know how they're doing. I understand that. THE COURT: Okay. MS. WILLIAMS: Second, the guarantee that's --THE COURT: I thought you were going in a different direction, which is we need to see the financials of the new -- you know, the ultimate new tenant, which I think is a different -- but I understand that, your update point. MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. And the quarantee that we've been shown does not require the guarantor to pay the landlord's reasonable attorneys' fees, which is a standard provision in lease guarantees, and they could make it very expensive if they wanted to to make us chase them if either there is no tenant ever or the ultimate tenant defaults. And it also requires us to come to New York, which we don't think is appropriate for a North Carolina lease guarantee. With respect to not knowing who this tenant is going to be, we do have some concerns about non-monetary issues, and this leads a little bit into cure rights, Your Honor. The space has been dark since January, the client

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Page 54 effort to find someone at Kmart who I think has been dealing 1 with the fire marshal, but we haven't been able to get into 2 3 the space to see what's going on with it. 4 We've had experience with Kmart in other stores, in fact in Asheville where it turns out all of the HVAC 5 6 units were leaking gas and Kmart never --7 MR. BAREFOOT: Your Honor, I'm just going to 8 Is counsel testifying? This is factual issues 9 about another lease that we've never heard before. I just 10 don't think it's appropriate from a hearsay perspective. 11 THE COURT: So what are you looking for, you're 12 looking for reasonable access? 13 MS. WILLIAMS: So well we are for the record --14 THE COURT: Don't you have that under the lease 15 already? 16 MS. WILLIAMS: We tried to get in when the fire 17 marshal was threatening --18 THE COURT: No, I'm sorry, reasonable access from 19 Transform, the lease that's being assigned. 20 MS. WILLIAMS: If we do then they're not following 21 the lease, because we asked for access and we were denied. 22 THE COURT: Okay. All right. 23 MS. WILLIAMS: The -- Your Honor, what I'm doing 24 for the record is I'm objecting to the adequate assurance 25 that we've been given for the reasons that I've stated.

Page 55 THE COURT: All right. So it would be a 1 2 reasonable update and reasonable access to determine, you 3 know, deteriorating conditions, fire safety, et cetera? 4 MS. WILLIAMS: Some assurance that whoever the 5 tenant is going to be is going to upkeep the space and not 6 have --7 THE COURT: Okay. 8 MS. WILLIAMS: -- a dangerous situation or get us 9 in trouble with the fire marshal. 10 THE COURT: Well although --11 MS. WILLIAMS: And --12 THE COURT: -- they have a guarantee, I'm assuming 13 that that's pretty reasonable assurance. 14 MS. WILLIAMS: Well I mean the provision of the 15 guarantee really, as someone who enforces guarantees all the 16 time, if you're going to make it expensive for your landlord 17 to chase you --18 THE COURT: I understand that. 19 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. 20 THE COURT: I understand that. 21 MS. WILLIAMS: And the North Carolina rather than 22 New York point. I think we're reserving our rights on cure amount. 23 24 MR. BAREFOOT: Your Honor, that's consistent with 25 the order that we've proposed and the order that you've

Page 56 1 entered. 2 THE COURT: Okay. 3 MR. BAREFOOT: All of their rights are reserves and we will escrow the undisputed -- the disputed amounts. 4 5 THE COURT: All right. Although I couldn't tell 6 from the objection whether the only cure issue was the money 7 that -- the two checks that weren't cashed. Is there other 8 cure? 9 MS. WILLIAMS: Well --10 THE COURT: It may be because you don't know the interior of the --11 12 MS. WILLIAMS: We --13 THE COURT: -- you haven't been inside to know if 14 there's something that's happened --15 MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah -- well yes --16 THE COURT: -- to the property? 17 MS. WILLIAMS: -- Your Honor, there's -- very 18 briefly. There's three issues, we can work this out later. 19 But the checks that have been sent are made out incorrectly 20 so they can't be cashed any way. 21 THE COURT: Okay. 22 MS. WILLIAMS: And we need to get our client 23 directly in touch with someone so that they don't continue 24 to run up attorneys' fees on this. It's very expensive for 25 them to have to come through us for every issue.

Page 57 This is a triple net lease, we don't know whether Kmart has paid the property taxes. Presumably we can work all that out to make sure that we're not going to be left with property taxes not paid. THE COURT: Okay. MR. BAREFOOT: Your Honor, I can represent all of those issues rights are fully reserved --THE COURT: Okay. MR. BAREFOOT: -- on both sides --THE COURT: All right. MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. MR. BAREFOOT: -- and consistent with all the other leases we'll duly reconcile them. THE COURT: That's fine. MS. WILLIAMS: And the -- well we've talked about the fact that we can't get in so we don't no whether there's other problems. THE COURT: Okay. So do you want to just respond on that -- on those points on the issues with the guarantee, whether you're prepared to provide some information on a prospective tenant and access -- reasonable access? MR. BAREFOOT: Yes, Your Honor. For the record Luke Barefoot from Cleary Gottlieb. Your Honor, on the points on amendments to the guarantee this is the first time we've heard those requests,

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Page 58 they all seem perfectly reasonable, and subject to 1 2 documentation I'm happy to make those amendments to the 3 guarantee. 4 THE COURT: Okay. All right. 5 MR. BAREFOOT: On the issue of adequate assurance, candidly, Your Honor, this is really untimely. 6 7 We've exchanged discovery, we've had depositions, 8 at no point have there been any discovery requests, informal 9 or formal, for any updated add I can't tell assurance 10 information. This is I understand somewhat stale, but 11 that's by virtue of the adjournments that the parties have 12 requested to have this heard in this fashion. 13 I don't think it's appropriate to further adjourn assignment of the lease. 14 15 THE COURT: Well has there been any material 16 adverse change? 17 MR. BAREFOOT: Not that I'm aware of, Your Honor. 18 THE COURT: Can that be represented? 19 MR. BAREFOOT: Not that I'm aware of, Your Honor. 20 THE COURT: Can that be represented by some 21 business person? 22 MR. BAREFOOT: Your Honor, I'd have to speak with my client, but I really think the time for assignment of 23 this lease has come. They've put all their eggs in this 24 25 basket, and it's a little unfair at the hearing when this

Page 59 was not subject to discovery at all to suddenly raise a new issue and have a whack a mole that we're never going to just get this lease assigned. Which I know is what they want to avoid, but I think it's what we're entitled to. The cure issues I can again represent we are fully reserved on the rights there, and I will work with counsel to put them in touch with a business person promptly. I think those discussions have not been happening because we haven't gotten through this threshold issue. THE COURT: Okay. All right. Well you know what, I -- this has been put off a couple of times and I certainly didn't have a sense that there was an adequate assurance issue on the financial end, so I agree with that point. The other points you've represented what the client is willing to do. So do you have anything to say in response to any of the other arguments on the asserted termination of the lease? MR. LEVANDER: I can brief and I can answer any questions that Your Honor has. THE COURT: Please stand up, yeah. MR. LEVANDER: So just very quickly. THE COURT: In California, they sit down. know if you're from California, but anyway --

MR. LEVANDER: Just very quickly, Your Honor.

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Page 60 second amendment, at tab 23, it's very clear that that's in 1 2 NAP's capacity as it's assignees landlord, that's very clear 3 in the recitals to that document. 4 Responding to the point about the granting and habendum clause. Those cases that are being cited from 5 6 North Carolina from before the 1960s there's generally some 7 kind of contrary provision. So there's a fee simple 8 interest and then there's a life estate in the body of the 9 document. There's nothing contrary here, those cases don't 10 identify --11 THE COURT: Because the assignment is separate --12 MR. LEVANDER: That's correct. 13 THE COURT: -- of the lease. 14 MR. LEVANDER: Exactly. 15 And then finally on the absolute assignment 16 question that Your Honor asked, yes, those are all absolute 17 assignments. The 1975 assignment from Asheville KM to NAP 18 is also an absolute assignment, just to make that clear for 19 the record. 20 THE COURT: Okay. 21 MR. LEVANDER: And if there are any questions, I'm 22 happy to answer them. THE COURT: Okay. All right. 23 I have before me an objection by what has been 24 25 referred to as the Bruce Trusts, which is the -- which are

the fee simple owners of real property located at 1001

Patton Avenue in Asheville, North Carolina, to the

assumption and assignment under Section 365 of the

Bankruptcy Code of a lease of that property to Transform

Holdco, the buyer, or its designee, under the asset purchase agreement that the Court has previously approved.

The lease in question was originally entered into on December 18, 1964 between S.S. Kresge Company, predecessor to Kmart, as tenant, and Patton Avenue Development Corporation, PADC, as landlord for the lease of the property and the store that PADC agreed to construct on the property.

The lease was for a term of 20 years and gave the tenant the right to extend for 3 more consecutive terms, each having 5 years that would run through January therefore 31, 2001.

I have the exhibits pertaining to this lease admitted into evidence, as well as certain other exhibits, and the witness for the Bruce Trusts deposition designations in evidence. They are Exhibits 1 through 45.

As far as the transaction documents are concerned, they reflect a first amendment to the Kmart lease in August 27, 1965, which made it clear that the lease would be binding on the landlord, including its assignees as defined in paragraph 1 thereof, and all subsequent amendments to the

lease also make it clear that it's binding on the parties, including the landlord and their assignees or vendees.

In February 1966, PADC conveyed its interest in the underlying real property to another entity called GK, Inc. which then conveyed its interest to Martin and Silvia Bruce. That same day the Bruces and Patton Plaza Associates entered into an agreement that assigned Patton Plaza Associates or PPA, all right, title, and interest of the landlord in and to all leases now in effect covering the demised premise, including the -- which included the Kmart lease. See Section 1307 of that agreement. And gave PPA a ground lease -- a 30-year ground lease with three renewal terms of 23 years each on a 99-year maximum term with annual rent from the Bruces.

In November of 1969, PPA assigned its interest in the ground lease and assignment to Nineteenth Asheville Corp. or NAC.

The important point though is with respect to the 1966 transaction. Whereas the landlord under the Kmart lease and the fee owner of the property were the same when the lease was first entered into in February 1966, the landlord became different from the fee owner of the ground lease of the -- the fee owner of the real property and the landlord of the ground lease. However, at that time, and as recognized in the transaction documents between PADC and --

I'm sorry -- between PPA and the Bruces, the Kmart lease was absolutely assigned in full to PPA.

Since that time that lease has continued to be assigned in full by its terms. It has now gone through a number of such assignments, and importantly was amended in March of 1992 by Kmart and the assignee of the Kmart lease to extend the term of the lease, that is, the Kmart lease, through with renewals 2032.

There was a third amendment also between NAP and Kmart on May 23, 2017 that split the renewals into two different periods, but the net effect is to extend it, if the renewal options are exercised by the tenant, through 2032.

The fee title and status as landlord under the ground lease and the ground tenant have also changed over the years. The Bruce Trusts are currently the fee owners and landlord is under the ground lease.

I believe it's acknowledged by both sides that the ground lease itself has expired earlier this year.

The Bruce Trusts contend that, at a minimum, because of the termination of the ground lease, there is no Kmart lease to be assigned; that is, the Kmart lease is subject to the ground lease as, in effect, a sublease under the ground lease. And under well-established law, which I don't believe Transform Holdco disputes, upon termination of

the head lease, which would here be the ground lease or the main lease, which again would be the ground lease, a sublease of that property would itself terminate since a subtenant has no more rights than it obtains through its landlord. And if its landlord's right to the property has ended, the subtenancy would cease, subject to equitable doctrines and the like.

The problem with this argument, however, is that here the Kmart lease preceded the ground lease and the transaction between PPA and the Bruces. The Kmart landlord and the ground landlord, respectively, predecessor -- predecessors, excuse me.

Moreover, not only was the ground lease subject to the Kmart lease but, as I noted earlier, the PPA Bruce agreement provides for the complete assignment of the Kmart lease to PPA, which then has continued to be completely assigned throughout its existence.

Under those circumstances, under the laws of North Carolina, which the parties agree applies here, privity of the estate is created between the original lessor and assignee. And therefore, I conclude that the parties to the amendments to the Kmart lease, in fact, had the authority to amend those documents as per the agreements between them, which would have the effect of extending the term through, if the renewals are exercised, 2032.

The assignment reserved no interest in the Kmart lease and it never was therefore a sublease. The only exception to that rule is if the assignor retained any remaining interest in the lease, and I conclude based on the documents between the parties that that was not the case.

As we went through during oral argument, the Bruce Trusts have argued that various provisions of Article 13 of the ground lease and assignment put restrictions on the assignment and ability to modify the lease, that is the Kmart lease, but I conclude that, as I said during oral argument, the restrictions apply to true subleases or future subleases of the Asheville premise and that, in fact, the amendments to the lease are consistent with the permitted changes under Section 1310 of the lease in that they extended the term and did not decrease the rent payable. fact, the 1992 assignment materially increased the rent payable. See, generally, Northside Station Associate Partnership v. Maddry, M-A-D-D-R-Y, 105 N.C. App. 384, 413 S.E.2d 319 (N.C. Ct. App. 1992), Kmart Corp. v. Guastello, 2008 N.C. App. LEXIS 1005 at pages 9 through 10 -- I'm sorry -- 9 through 12, N.C. App., as I said, May 20 of 2008. And see, generally, although this doesn't deal with real property leases but rather contract rights, Rose v. Vulcan Materials Co., 282 N.C. 643, 194 S.E.2d 521, (Sup.Ct. N.C. 1973) at North Carolina Reporters 661 through 663.

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To be contrasted with these facts is Neal v. Craig Brown, Inc., 86 N.C. Ct. App. 157, 356 S.E.2d 912 (N.C. Ct. App. 1987) at N.C. Ct. App. pages 162 through 163.

One can alternatively rule that given the absolute assignments the landlords under the Kmart leases had actual authority as well as apparent authority under North Carolina law to enter into those agreements, that is the amendments that extended the ultimate term of the lease through 2032.

See, generally, Hogue v. Cruise (ph), 812 S.E.2d (1915) and Walker v. Sloan, 429 S.E.2d 236, 243 through 44, North Carolina -- (N.C. App. 2000).

I say this notwithstanding the recordation of the ground lease, given the terms of the ground lease, and the assignment therein of the underlying Kmart lease. So I will deny the objection.

As far as the other part of the objection

pertaining to -- I'm sorry -- I'll deny that portion of the

objection that's premised on the lease having terminated.

As far as the remaining portion of the objection, the only part that has not been resolved on the record is the request by the Bruce Trusts for additional financial disclosure by Transform Holdco from that disclosure that had previously been provided at this point a couple of months ago. Given the length of time that this matter has been pending, the discovery that's taken place, and the fact that

that request was made for the first time in oral argument today, I believe it's too late.

The basis for objecting on grounds of adequate assurance under Section 365 needs to lay out some rationale where adequate assurance has already been offered, or a form of adequate assurance has already been offered. If, in fact, it had been made timely, the buyer of Transform Holdco could have considered it, and consistent with what it has done so far in this case, in all likelihood, it would have provided some form of information to the Bruce Trusts. But it's not in a position to do that today. Its client isn't here, it hasn't considered the issue, and it's under a deadline to move forward under 365(d)(4). So for all of those rules I'll overrule that portion of the adequate assurance objection.

So I think you're going to have to mark up the order slightly to deal with the guarantee point and maybe the access point, unless that's already in the lease, and then you can email it to chambers. You don't need to formally settle it on counsel for the Bruce Trusts, but you should provide it to them before you send it into chambers.

MS. WILLIAMS: Your Honor, could I -- one technical clarification? On the evidence that's before the Court, there's also the declaration of Mr. Bruce, which is 4091, which was effectively his direct and then the depo was

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1	the cross.
2	THE COURT: Well, I understood we were just going
3	with the depo though. Are we going with his declaration,
4	too?
5	MR. BAREFOOT: Your Honor, it was our
6	understanding that would be his direct testimony
7	THE COURT: With?
8	MR. BAREFOOT: consistent his declaration
9	THE COURT: His declaration.
10	MR. BAREFOOT: would be his direct testimony
11	THE COURT: That's fine then.
12	MR. BAREFOOT: We have no objection to its
13	THE COURT: I have no problem with that.
14	MR. BAREFOOT: admission.
15	MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.
16	THE COURT: That's fine.
17	(Declaration of Mr. Bruce received in evidence)
18	MR. BAREFOOT: And Your Honor, we will work with
19	counsel on the name to submit a consensual order as soon as
20	possible, and in any event before the July 8th 365(d)(4)
21	deadline.
22	THE COURT: Okay.
23	MS. WILLIAMS: And I guess the only thing that
24	the only other thing we wanted to say on the record, because
25	I'm not sure how the form orders have been working in this

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	Page 69
1	case, but we're we want to preserve our right to
2	appeal
3	THE COURT: Oh, yeah, that's
4	MS. WILLIAMS: We're not
5	THE COURT: You don't need to
6	MS. WILLIAMS: We're not agreeing to the waiver of
7	the stay
8	THE COURT: That's fine.
9	MS. WILLIAMS: the 14-day stay. Thank you,
10	Your Honor.
11	MR. BAREFOOT: Well, Your Honor, there just might
12	be a time issue there.
13	THE COURT: Well, as far as if you're going to
14	be relying on $365(d)(4)$, I will waive the stay to the extent
15	that it interferes with that. I mean
16	MR. BAREFOOT: Or we'd be happy for them to grant
17	an additional extension
18	THE COURT: Right. That's why I prefaced it by
19	saying if you're going to rely on 365(d)(4) as running.
20	Then clearly there's cause to waive the stay before it runs.
21	MS. WILLIAMS: And remind me, that deadline is
22	the
23	MR. BAREFOOT: July 8th.
24	MS. WILLIAMS: 8th? I only have half of my
25	client here, Your Honor, so we'll connect on that, and

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1	THE COURT: All right. But in any event			
2	MS. WILLIAMS: if it becomes an issue			
3	THE COURT: I'll waive it			
4	MR. BAREFOOT: To the extent			
5	THE COURT: through July 7th, yeah, or to the			
6	extent required, so it would run one day before even if			
7	it's extended it would run one day before the expiration.			
8	MR. BAREFOOT: Depending on when we can get the			
9	order submitted, but			
10	THE COURT: Right.			
11	MR. BAREFOOT: hopefully we'll work this out			
12	and that won't be an issue, Your Honor.			
13	THE COURT: Okay. Very well.			
14	MR. BAREFOOT: That's the entirety of the agenda			
15	for today, Your Honor.			
16	THE COURT: Okay. Thank you.			
17	MR. BAREFOOT: Thank you, Your Honor.			
18	(Whereupon, these proceedings were concluded at 3:56			
19	p.m.)			
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Page 72 CERTIFICATION 1 2 3 We, Lisa Beck and Dawn South, certify that the foregoing 4 transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. Digitally signed by Lisa Beck Lisa Bec 5 DN: cn=Lisa Beck, o, ou, email=digital@veritext.com, c=US Date: 2020.03.03 10:06:14 -05'00' 6 7 Lisa Beck Digitally signed by Dawn South 8 DN: cn=Dawn South, o, ou, Dawn South email=digital@veritext.com, c=US Date: 2020.03.03 10:06:27 -05'00' 9 10 Dawn South Certified Electronic Transcriber 11 12 13 14 15 Date: June 30, 2019 16 17 Veritext Legal Solutions 18 330 Old Country Road Suite 300 19 20 Mineola, NY 11501 21 22 23 24 25

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